

Edited by Wendy Karppi



Ram Bookout

Super Hornet Highlights

The *Super Hornet* demonstrated its aerial refueling capability when an F/A-18E successfully refueled another *Super Hornet*, an S-3 *Viking* and an F-14 *Tomcat* over NAS Patuxent River, Md. Equipped with an aerial refueling system—an external fuel tank and hose reel mounted on the centerline, also known as a buddy store—the *Super Hornet* can carry more than 29,000 pounds of fuel and transfer it from internal and external tanks to a receiving aircraft.

The *Super Hornet* program completed the engineering, manufacturing and development test phase at NAS Patuxent River, Md., logging 3,172 flights and 4,673 flight hours in less than three and a half years of flight testing. Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 9 commenced operational evaluation (OPEVAL) on 27 May at NAWS China Lake, Calif., with five production models. Delivery of the next two production models will bring the OPEVAL fleet to three single-seat E models and four two-seat F models. The seven



Kurt Langfield

The *Super Hornet* program has completed the sea trials phase, top, and has entered operational evaluation. Above, an F/A-18E refuels an S-3 *Viking* at NAS Patuxent River, Md.

aircraft at Pax will remain there for follow-on test and evaluation.

In the Gulf

Coalition aircraft struck two targets in southern Iraq on 17 May in response to anti-aircraft artillery fire directed at coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. F/A-18 *Hornets* and Air Force A-10 *Thunderbolt IIs* used precision-guided munitions to strike a surface-to-air missile site and an

anti-aircraft artillery site near Baghdad. The U.S. Central Command reported that this incident brought the number of Iraqi provocations in the no-fly zone to more than 180 since the end of Operation Desert Fox in December 1998.

EA-6B Jams On

Marconi Aerospace Electrical Systems, Inc., Rockville, Md., delivered the first ALQ-99 Band 9/10 radar jamming transmitter for

the EA-6B *Prowler* on 8 April. This initial delivery was the first of 120 planned units, which will provide new jamming capabilities to counter advanced surface-to-air missile systems.

Tilt-rotor Tidbits

The first production MV-22 *Osprey* rolled out at the Bell Helicopter Textron facilities in Fort Worth, Texas, on 14 May. Aircraft #11 is the first of four low-rate initial production *Ospreys* that will be delivered to the Marines for operational evaluation scheduled for October.

On 3 May the V-22 program received the 1999 Department of Defense Acquisition Executive's Certificate of Achievement from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition. The award cited that a contract through which Allison will provide maintenance and supply support for the AE-1107C engine will save millions of dollars.

Medal Approved

The Secretary of Defense approved the award of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal in addition to the Armed Forces Service Medal to qualifying service members participating in or providing direct support to Operation Joint Endeavor (20 November 1995–19 December 1996) or Operation Joint Guard (20 December 1996–20 June 1998). This is a modification to the usual policy which allows only one award for the same act or period of service.

Airborne COBRA

The Marine Corps is in the final stage of development of a system to detect minefields using a *Pioneer* unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). In the Coastal Battlefield Reconnaissance and Analysis (COBRA) system, two cameras search the ground through different colored lenses which distinguish mines from the ultraviolet spectrum

produced by the surrounding landscape. Although currently being tested with the *Pioneer*, COBRA is designed to fit any UAV that is in use when the system becomes operational, which is expected to take place in the next four to five years.

Glenn Center Named

The NASA Lewis Research Center, Cleveland, Ohio, became the John H. Glenn Research Center at Lewis Field on 1 March. Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth in 1962, served as a senator for 24 years and returned to space in 1998 aboard the space shuttle *Discovery*.

Mercury Capsule Discovered

Another triumph for underwater archaeology occurred on 1 May when *Liberty Bell 7*—the Mercury space capsule flown by astronaut Gus Grissom—was discovered 300 miles southeast of Cape Canaveral, Fla.,

ALLIED FORCE WINS THE DAY

An agreement signed in Macedonia on 9 June set the stage for the departure of Serbian army, special police and paramilitary forces from Kosovo. The next day, as intelligence reports showed these forces beginning to leave the area, NATO suspended Operation Allied Force, a campaign of air strikes that had run for 79 days. NATO will now head an international peace force of 48,000 that the United Nations has authorized to enter Kosovo. The agreement also dictates the return of the refugees who had been removed from the region and the establishment of an autonomous government for Kosovo.



Flight deck crewmembers aboard *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) wash down an F/A-18 *Hornet* on 11 June following the suspension of Operation Allied Force.

JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER UPDATE



Lockheed Martin Tactical Aircraft Systems and the Boeing Co. are continuing development of the concept demonstration aircraft for the Joint Strike Fighter program. Above, Lockheed Martin's version begins to take shape at the Skunk Works, Palmdale, Calif., and right, the wing section is lowered to the fuselage at the Boeing plant, also in Palmdale. The Joint Strike Fighter design includes variations for the U.S. Navy, Air Force and Marines, as well as the Royal Navy. A competition winner will be selected in 2001.



three miles below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. The only U.S. manned spacecraft to be lost following a successful mission, the capsule's location was unknown since it sank upon splashdown on 21 July 1961.

Boeing to Support T-45 Training System

The Boeing Co., St. Louis, Mo., received a five-year, \$650-million contract to continue support for the T-45 Training System, which it has provided on an interim basis for seven years. Logistical support functions include flight-line operations and maintenance, component and depot maintenance,

paint removal and application, corrosion control, and spares inventory management and supply. Boeing claims a 20-percent reduction in cost per flight hour during the interim period, and expects additional cost reductions during the term of this contract.

Carrier Clips

Enterprise (CVN 65) returned to her home port in Norfolk, Va., on 6 May following a six-month deployment.

Carl Vinson (CVN 70) completed a six-month deployment and returned to her home port in Bremerton, Wash., in May.

Mishaps

An AV-8B *Harrier* of Marine Attack Squadron 231, MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., crashed while returning to *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) in the Adriatic Sea on 1 May. The pilot ejected safely and was recovered and returned to the ship by an embarked CH-46 *Sea Knight*.

A Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361 CH-53E *Super Stallion* struck the water during low-light operations with night-vision devices off Japan on 10 April, killing the four personnel aboard.

Deactivated

VXE-6 Ice Pirates

One of the Navy's most unusual—and well-known—squadrons has been deactivated after 44 years of service. Antarctic Development Squadron (VXE) 6 was deactivated in a 27 March 1999 ceremony (effective 1 April) at NAS Point Mugu, Calif. Cdr. David W. Jackson was the last CO of the *Ice Pirates*.

VXE-6 originally was established on 17 January 1955 at NAS Patuxent River, Md., as Air Development Squadron Six (VX) 6 in conjunction with the Navy's evolving role of providing support for scientific exploration on the Antarctic continent. The squadron had its roots in Operation High Jump, an extensive aerial survey conducted in December 1946 by RAdm. Richard E. Byrd as his fourth Antarctic expedition.

VX-6 began its first deployment in support of Operation Deep Freeze, as the exploration effort became known, in November 1955. The squadron completed nine long-range exploration flights and transported the personnel and materials needed to construct Little America Base Camp, the naval air operations facility at Hut Point, and South Pole Station. Upon return from its first deployment, the squadron changed its home base to NAS Quonset Point, R.I.

Over the first 15 years of operations, VX-6 flew a variety of aircraft: R4D-5L/6L (LC-47H/J) *Skytrains*, R4D-8L (LC-117D) *Skytroopers*, R5D-3 (C-54Q) *Skymasters*, R7V-1/IP (C-121J) *Constellations*, P-2V-2N and P2V-5L (LP-2J) *Neptunes*, UC-1 (U-1B) *Otters* and HUS-1A (UH-34E) and HUS-1L (LH-34D) *Seahorse* helicopters. Beginning in 1961, four ski-equipped UV-1L (C-130BL, later LC-130F) *Hercules* transports were added, dramatically increasing the squadron's lift capability. The LC-130Fs were augmented during the early 1970s by six LC-130R versions. At this time, the LC-130 became the only fixed-wing aircraft type operated by the



squadron, with the exception of an EC-130Q and TC-130Q used for crew training during the early 1990s. UH-1D "Hueys" augmented the LH-34Ds in 1970, but both types were replaced by the UH-1N (later HH-1N) helicopter beginning in 1972. The HH-1Ns were operated by VXE-6 until replaced in April 1996 by contractor-operated helicopters.

VX-6 was redesignated VXE-6 on 1 January 1969. Its nickname, the *Puckered Penguins*, eventually became the *Ice Pirates*. The squadron's home base changed to NAS Point Mugu in 1974.

VXE-6's annual deployments to Antarctica, staged from its detachment site in Christchurch, New Zealand, accomplished many "firsts." In 1955, two P2V-2Ns and two R5D-3s forged the first air link between Christchurch and McMurdo Station. In 1956, an R4D named *Que Sera Sera* became the first aircraft to land at the South Pole. In 1958, a UC-1 made the first "wheels on dirt" landing in Antarctica. In 1961, the

squadron made its first mid-winter fly-in, in this case to evacuate a Soviet scientist from Byrd Station. In 1964, an LC-130F conducted the first flight from Capetown, South Africa, to McMurdo Station; the first U.S. flight to the Soviet station at Vostok; and the first demonstration of Trimetrogon photography to map the Antarctic continent. During Deep Freeze '90, a VXE-6 LC-130 made the first wheeled landing on a "blue ice" surface, near the Beardmore Glacier. In October 1991, an all-female crew flew an LC-130 to the South Pole for the first time to begin Deep Freeze '91.

VXE-6 was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for a 1978 mission during which it evacuated five Soviets critically injured in the crash of an IL-14 transport aircraft. The rescue flights covered 3,650 miles (round trip), about 24 hours of flight time.

During Deep Freeze '88, an LC-130F that had been buried in ice and snow since a 1971 mishap was recovered and eventually restored to service. Unfortunately, an LC-130R involved in the recovery effort crashed, killing several squadron crewmen, accenting the unforgiving nature of flight over Antarctica.

After the Navy shut down its Antarctic support force in March 1998, VXE-6 assisted the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing during its final season (1998-1999) in assuming the mission of Antarctic support. Raytheon Systems Company is modifying the squadron's three remaining LC-130Rs to Air Force LC-130H standards.

During its service, VXE-6 transported more than 195,000 passengers, 240 million pounds of dry cargo and almost 10 million gallons of fuel to sites in Antarctica. Twenty-five Navy personnel and one Marine died while carrying out the squadron's Antarctic operations.

Rick Burgess wrote the deactivation article.

Thanks to Buddy Joyce for providing the insignia.

